



# Pandemic Perceptions Among College Students & Staff During COVID-19

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## Introduction

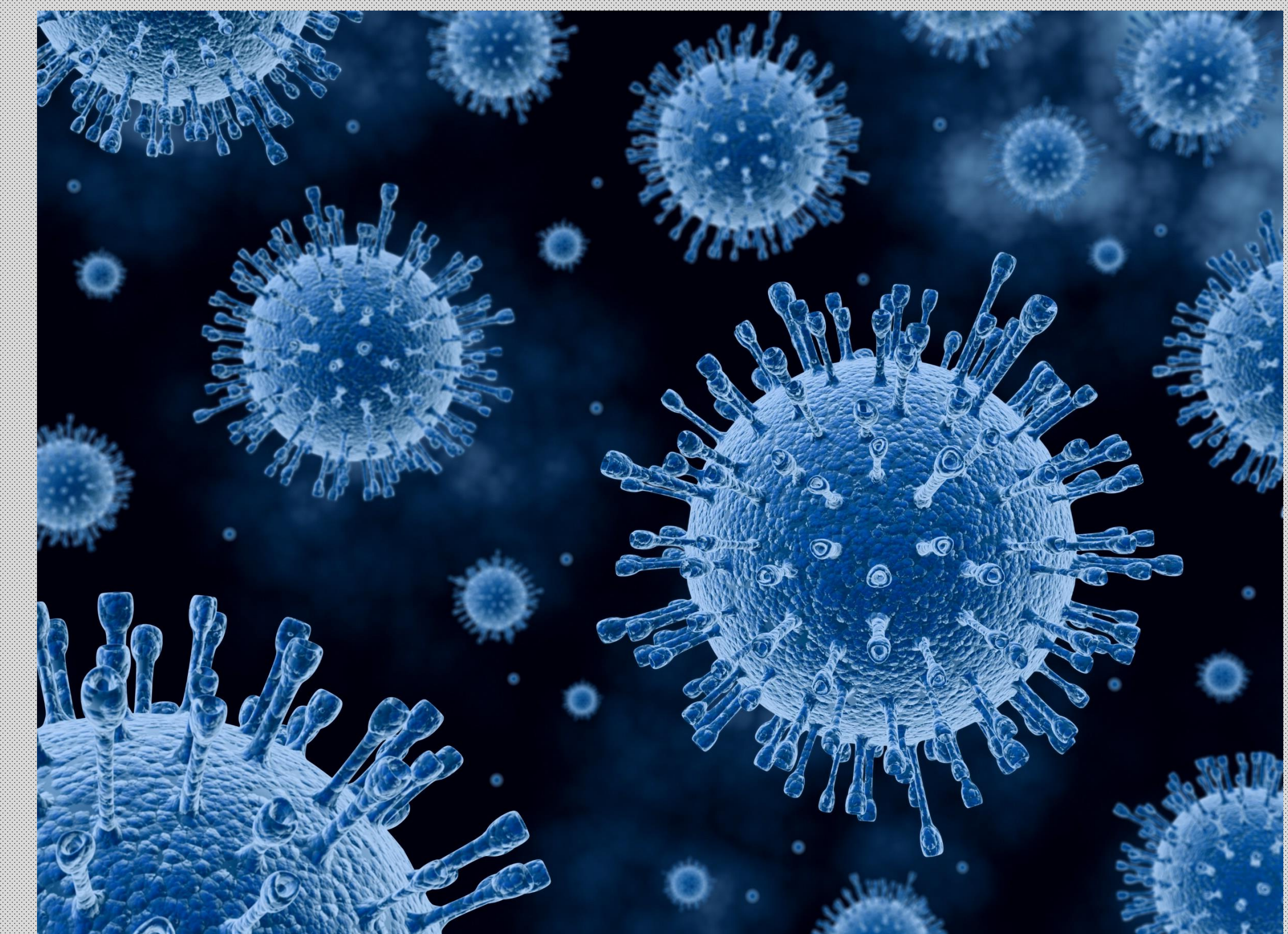
The global COVID-19 pandemic resulted in an information hailstorm concerning the prevalence, precautions, and treatment of COVID-19.

There have been over 42 million cases of COVID-19 in the USA, and 675,000 deaths (September 2021).

The high amount of multichannel COVID-19 information has led to widespread misinformation and mixed public opinions.

## Goals

- Describe knowledge and beliefs about the COVID-19 pandemic and explore the gaps between what college students report about the virus, vaccine, and related behaviors and what is known.
- Identify main sources of information
  - Identify level of COVID-19 knowledge
  - Identify vaccination intention



## Methods & Results

**Survey & Data Collection**

- Student survey included a combination of COVID-19 questions (n=30-40 questions) from information from Centers for Disease and Control (CDC) and questions from the National Health Interview Survey by the CDC.
- Convenience sample of WSU students, administered Spring 2020, Fall 2020, and Spring 2021.
- Data was collected via online surveys via Qualtrics.

**Table 1. Student and Staff Demographics (Spring 2021)**

Sex ( n = 295 )		
Male	107	36.27%
Female	185	62.72%
Other	3	1.01%
Race & Ethnicity ( n = 338 )		
African American	12	3.55%
Asian	41	12.13%
Caucasian	217	64.20%
Latino/Hispanic	32	9.47%
Native American	9	2.66%
Native Hawaiian	1	0.30%
Two or more	20	5.92%
Other/unknown	6	1.78%
Age ( n = 312 )		
15 to 24	194	62.14%
25 to 34	69	22.13%
35 to 44	27	8.68%
45 to 54	17	5.45%
55 to 64	5	1.6%

**Table 2. COVID-19 Information Sources Most Commonly Used ( n = 321; Spring 2021)**

Internet	148	46.11%
Social media	77	23.99%
Family & friends	25	7.79%
Radio/TV	37	11.53%
Healthcare professionals	22	6.85%
Other	12	3.73%

## Results

Survey results suggests most participants have a general understanding of COVID-19 knowledge and can identify fever (79%, n=307), cough (78%, n=302), and breathing problems (81%, n=314) as the most common symptoms.

In Spring 2021 75% (n=324) of students reported they would receive the FDA approved COVID-19 vaccine (up from 68% (n=635) in Spring 2020 and 62% (n=152) in Fall 2020).

Participant's support for using face masks was 4.17 (on a sliding scale of 1-5) in Spring 2021. Using the same scale, participant's support was 1.87 in Spring 2020.

The most commonly source of information reported by participants was the internet, followed by social media and the radio/TV.

Overall confidence in public health officials remained at a 3.45 (on a sliding scale of 1-5) through the 3 survey iterations.

## Discussion

The results indicate that the public's trust in public health officials increased throughout the pandemic, although the internet is the most common source of information regarding COVID-19 and healthcare professionals are among the least commonly used sources. The results are also indicative of increased support for masks and vaccines. This survey should made available on a wider scale with a larger study population in order to generalize the findings.

## Limitations

- ❖ Sample size
  - Include more incentives for survey participation
- ❖ Survey fatigue
  - Shorten length of future surveys
- ❖ Language
  - Survey was only offered in English; future surveys should be offered in more languages
- ❖ Online survey format
  - Future surveys should be accessible by paper

## Conclusion

This study highlights the continued need for strategized public health communication along with the importance of focusing on internet and social media outlets to target misinformation regarding COVID-19.

## References

Available upon request.